

Senate Bill 174 – Opponent Testimony

October 6, 2025

Currently, the law allows one parent to arbitrarily be removed from the child's daily life. This is an injustice and is causing an underreported mental health crisis in Ohio. It really is astonishing that the Family Courts have been permitted to trample on families for so long. When parents decide to get divorced, children do not decide to get divorced from one parent. However, this is exactly the practice in the majority of Ohio's counties.

The current policies are outdated and are bad for children, parents, and taxpayers. They are rooted in the decades old stereotypes that one parent is the breadwinner and the other parent is the nurturer. Currently each county in Ohio has created their own standard parenting schedule. Approximately two-thirds of our 88 counties have a parenting schedule that forces children to not see one parent with the exception of 2 overnights in a 2-week period! Why is Ohio treating children of divorce so poorly compared to children of married parents?

The current schedules incentivize conflict and accusations as parents jockey to be declared the winner of child custody. The current standard parenting schedules create high emotional, physical, and financial stress on parents and children.

You may argue that the decision to assign one parent as the every other weekend parent is not arbitrary because a judge is supposed to use "preponderance of the evidence" as the evidence threshold. However, when a judge bases a decision and pushes one parent aside by stating:

- "that it could be stressful in the future to revert to 50/50 parenting time" or
- "this was a tough decision because none of the custody factors favor either parent over the other"
- or "the mother does not want to be friends so you cannot have more parenting time", it is readily apparent that these decisions are arbitrary.

Furthermore, that fact that standard parenting schedules are different depending on which side of the county line road a parent lives exposes the haphazard process for these decisions.

A presumption of equal shared parenting for fit parents is one of the few bi-partisan issues that is overwhelmingly supported by the public. However, SB174 would push Ohio backwards. SB174 removes shared parenting and gives judges total discretion even if both parents agree to shared parenting. SB174 allows judges total discretion to push aside one fit parent from a child's life. This runs completely contrary to decades of research showing that equal shared parenting schedules benefits children.

Stop monetizing the child-parent relationship! You need pass a bill establishing a presumption of equal shared parenting across Ohio!

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